



Rules for Radicals

by Saul D. Alinsky

The Manifesto of a Madman

Reviewed by J.R. Dickens

Summary

Rules for Radicals is a nauseating specimen of literary excrement that reeks of rambling irrationality and misplaced self-righteous indignation. It is the revolutionary manifesto of a madman without a cause whose sole vision is channeling the latent hatred of the oppressed underclass toward the exercise of raw power for institutional destruction. Alinsky's philosophy is tempered by the unshakable confidence that somewhere in that pile of revolutionary horse manure is the pony of a better society. It is a classic pitting of the Have-Nots against the Haves for the sole purpose of trading places with them and perpetuating an endless cycle of revolution with no means of reconciliation. Meanwhile one is left to wonder how anything constructive can ever come from finding your life's purpose in hating and destroying your "enemies" while pretending to care about "human dignity."

Movie: *Unbreakable*

- From the writer/director M. Night Shayamalan:

“Good cannot exist without evil. And evil cannot exist without good. And so, basically, Elijah’s character needed to find the hero so he could take his mantle and be the villain.”

3

Eastern Duality on Display

- Alinsky explicitly embraces the Eastern philosophy of Yin-Yang
- There is good and bad in everything, and moral judgment is mostly a matter of one’s perspective

4

Some Background

- *RFR* published in 1971
- Alinsky died in 1972
- started organizing back in the 1930s
- by the end of the 1960s:
 - decades of war
 - nuclear arms race
 - growing fears of overpopulation and pollution
 - increasing poverty in minority communities
 - increasing discontentment among the Boomer generation

5

More Background

- 1965: Marcuse “Repressive Tolerance”
 - tolerance as a subversive liberating notion
- 1966: Cloward-Piven Strategy
 - overwhelm the system to achieve greater government intervention
- 1968: Erlich *The Population Bomb*
 - predicted that millions would soon die from starvation

6

Contradiction is a Feature Not a Bug

- All of life is a contradiction – there are no absolutes
- Morality is also relativistic and pragmatic
 - the ends justify the means
 - personal conscience must yield to the collective good
- The right means are judged by
 - what you are able to do
 - the effect it's likely to produce
 - i.e., using the available means to produce the most desirable outcome

7

Contradiction is a Feature Not a Bug

- Words are relative “like everything else”—but clear communication is essential

8

Conflict is also a Feature

- “Change means movement. Movement means friction. Only in the frictionless vacuum of a nonexistent abstract world can movement or change occur without the abrasive friction of conflict.” (p. 21)
- we must tear down the existing structure before building something new (“disrupting the old patterns”)

9

Opposing worldviews (G.E. Veith)

- “But the liberals believe that *individuals can do little* and that solving the problem requires **changing the systems**. Whereas conservatives believe that to solve the problems even in the systems means **changing the people** who are caught up in them.” (my emphasis)
- the gist of the difference: *is man basically good or bad?*
- <https://www.patheos.com/blogs/geneveith/2021/03/the-differences-between-progressives-and-conservatives/>

10

Social Media as a Medium for Revolution

- Tim Challies reviewing *Terms of Service* by Chris Martin
- social media “causes us to demonize people we dislike, and it causes us to destroy people we demonize.”
- implied but not stated? *we reflexively dislike the people we disagree with*
- Alinsky could not have imagined the power of social media to reach individuals and build the “communities” that are the source of revolutionary power; as he made the point, a community is not a particular location, but a cause – and what better way to bring together a scattered “community” than social media?
- <https://www.challies.com/book-reviews/the-real-cost-of-social-media/>

11

Alinsky as Pseudo-Intellectual

- plenty of historical, literary, philosophical, and biblical references
- he is unquestionably well-read and can draw from an assortment of supporting arguments
- the only problem is that his all his major premises are wrong so his arguments are intellectual nonsense
- sinful emotion is the driving force behind his philosophy—especially **envy** and **greed** and **hatred** and the desire for **revenge**
- Alinsky’s 20th-century pseudo-intellectualism has become 21st-century infantile emotionalism (all the *emotion* but none of the *intellect*)

12

Biblical References . . .

- Numerous biblical references and even a couple of quotations from Christ
 - Moses as a great negotiator (bargaining with an angry God)
 - Paul as a revolutionary
 - Jesus as a polarizing figure (viz., “whoever is not with us is against us”)
- we can add “blasphemy” to Alinsky’s list of faults

13

Truth and Untruth

- Alinsky is adamantly opposed to any manner of dogmatism (and we notice he’s very dogmatic about that)
- truth would almost certainly get in the way of the revolution
- meanwhile he wants to justify revolution as an ongoing process of attaining the ultimate values of freedom, equality, justice, peace, and the right to dissent
- he also uphold what he calls the “preciousness” of human life

14

Alinsky's Dilemma of Leadership Development

- While attempting to “train” revolutionaries, Alinsky discovered that people can only operate from the reference point of their own experience
 - people are limited by what they know and cannot extrapolate past experience to new situations
- *Rules for Radicals* was an attempt to systematize the principles behind the tactics in his earlier work, *Reveille for Radicals* (1946)

15

Alinsky's Dilemma of Leadership Development (cont'd)

- In a nutshell, people do not know how to *think* logically
- from *particulars* to *universals* and back (inductive-deductive reasoning)
 - this was already true by the middle 20th century (1950s-1960s)
 - the education system had already failed by this time
- Alinsky could see that revolutionary potential was limited by the lack of true leadership

16

What is an “organizer”?

- Many interchangeable terms:
 - organizer
 - revolutionary
 - activist
 - radical
 - agitator

17

How to Make a Revolutionary

- Activism is the spice of life
 - people hunger for drama and adventure in the search for personal identity
- Everyone wants something they don't have
- Bring in as many “issues” as you can to keep the action moving
 - people get bored and lose interest
 - more issues means more people
 - more people means more power

18

Polarizing the Sides

- Essential to the revolution
 - “One acts decisively only in the conviction that all the angels are on one side and all the devils on the other.” (p. 134)
- “they” are the **enemy** – and the key to advancing the revolution is to direct your animosity toward the enemy
 - the enemy is not allowed to possess *any* virtue
 - the enemy must be particular, not general
 - sounds like Orwell’s “Two Minute Hate” —there must be an Emmanuel Goldstein who serves as the object of hatred
- the explicit goal is to inflame resentments so people will act

19

The Necessity of Compromise

- When agitating, you demand *everything*
- When negotiating, you take *anything*
- (principle: once the opposition begins to yield, you know you can come back with more demands)

20

Defining the Classes of Society

- **Haves**
 - they have what you want and they don't want you to have it
 - they have the power
 - their efforts revolve around preserving what they have
- **Have-Nots**
 - these are the “oppressed” underclass who want what the Haves already have
 - by not having what the Haves have, they naturally hate the Haves and want to destroy them
- **Have-A-Little-Want-More**
 - Alinsky doesn't say much about this group except to describe them as the “middle class”
 - (probably the middle class don't have a place in the new society)

21

It's the Power, Stupid

- Alinsky really likes the word *power*
- He goes on to say that the sole purpose of organizations is to wield power
 - “Change comes from power and power comes from organization.” (p. 113)
- power is in the organization, and the organization is power
- the size of the organization determines its potential to exercise power
- not only real power, but *perceived* power: the perception of power may be enough to force surrender of the enemy

22

Jailhouse Philosophy 101

- Alinsky says that being arrested and jailed has a variety of benefits that serve the cause:
 - street cred (taking one for the team)
 - polarization (because your enemy is attacking you)
 - time to systematize your beliefs
- Tactics for arrest: small infractions that lead to short jail terms
 - too much time in jail and people might forget you
- Based on the rambling philosophy in *RFR* we deduce that Alinsky didn't spend nearly enough time in jail

23

Newton's Third Law of Revolution

- For every activist *action*, there is an opposite *reaction* from the enemy
 - the enemy's reaction is the key to the revolution
 - you don't know what it will be . . .
 - but you must be prepared for the next step
- Your goal is to surprise your enemy by your tactics and hope for a clumsy response that you can take advantage of
 - Hint: the enemy *really* hates being ridiculed
- In this kind of back-and-forth, you cannot predict the course of the revolution

24

Stochastic Revolution

- You can never really know where the revolution is going to take you
- Revolution is a constant process of attack and react
- When one concession is achieved, agitate for the next one
- And so on . . .

25

What is the End Game?

- Endless revolution—the promise of a better society once all existing structures are destroyed
- The static society is intolerable—it is the effort of the Haves to preserve their power and wealth
- Consequence of “progressive” philosophy?
 - nothing we’ve done in the past is worth preserving
 - nothing we’re doing now is worth keeping
 - “Hope and Change”
 - “Forward!”
- There can be no “normal” when everything is in a state of flux

26

Alinsky and Genocide?

- Following the philosophy to its logical conclusion . . .
- Connection with Gregory Stanton *Ten Stages of Genocide* (1996/2013)
- If you really, really hate your **enemies** and want to get the ultimate revenge (and to prevent them from regaining the power they lost in the revolution), why not just get rid of them?
- Genocide seems to be quite consistent with the means/ends arguments and with the imperative to exercise power against your “oppressors”
- After all, “good” and “bad” are mostly a matter of which side you’re on

27

The American Genocide

- One notices the ruthless genocide against the unborn and suspects that the woman’s “right” to kill her offspring is precisely to avoid being “oppressed” by the responsibilities of parenthood
- Alinsky explicitly affirms his belief in the “right” to abortion and contraception – and the assumption that children cause poverty (a creed of Malthusians the world over)
 - note: RvW is still two years in the future

28

An Idiotic Optimism

- Will things be better?
- *Yes* and *No* – because the good and bad always go together
- Fits perfectly into the yin-yang, dark-light, good-evil dualism
- Meaning (telos) is found in the struggle (which sounds like Nietzsche's will to power)

29

Why Study Alinsky?

- helpful in understanding the devil's tactics
- an enduring legacy of evil: explains the last 50 years of revolutionary politics
 - the Clinton cartel (Hill was an avid disciple of Alinsky in the 1960s)
 - the Obama regime (which continues today under Biden): the “fundamental transformation” of America marches on
 - power politics of billionaires like Soros and Gates
- may be useful to the PCA in its fight against the woke sodomite agenda
 - they envision “a PCA worth having”—which means that the current PCA isn't one worth keeping

30

Questions and Discussion